Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the present application.

1. (previously presented) A method of inhibiting desiccation of cuttings removed from plants comprising:

treating a plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide;

removing a cutting from the treated plant; and

exposing the removed cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the removed cutting,

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the removed cutting.

2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the plant.

3. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

4. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

5. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

6. (previously presented) The method of claim 1 further comprising:

applying a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the removed cutting.

7. (original) The method of claim 1, wherein the cutting comprises a stem, a leaf, a flower, or combinations thereof.

8-17 (canceled)

18. (currently amended) A method of harvesting a cutting from a plant comprising:

treating a plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide; ~~and~~

harvesting a cutting from the treated plant, the cutting comprising at lease one flower; and

exposing the harvested cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the harvested cutting,

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the harvested cutting and enhances the longevity of flower blooms on the harvested cutting.

19. (previously presented) The method of claim 18, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the plant.

20. (original) The method of claim 18, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

21. (original) The method of claim 20, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 18, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

23. (original) The method of claim 18 further comprising:

applying a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the harvested cutting.

24 (canceled)

25. (previously presented) A method of harvesting a cutting from a plant comprising:

harvesting a cutting from a plant and

treating the harvested cutting with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide,

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the harvested cutting and enhances the longevity of flower blooms on the harvested cutting.

26. (original) The method of claim 25, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the cutting.

27. (original) The method of claim 25, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

28. (original) The method of claim 27, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

29. (previously presented) The method of claim 25, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

30. (original) The method of claim 25, wherein the cutting comprises a stem, a leaf, a flower, or combinations thereof.

31. (currently amended) A method of inhibiting desiccation of cuttings from plants comprising:

removing a cutting from a plant; and

treating the removed cutting with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide; ~~and~~

~~exposing the removed cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the removed cutting;~~

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the removed cutting.

32. (original) The method of claim 31, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the cutting.

33. (original) The method of claim 31, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

34. (original) The method of claim 33, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

35. (previously presented) The method of claim 31, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

36. (original) The method of claim 31, wherein the cutting comprises a stem, a leaf, a flower, or combinations thereof.

37. (previously presented) A cutting which has been removed from a plant, wherein the cutting has been treated with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide and wherein the cutting is characterized by greater resistance to desiccation as compared to an untreated cutting removed from the plant.

38. (original) The cutting according to claim 37, wherein the cutting comprises a stem, a leaf, a flower, or combinations thereof.

39. (original) The cutting of claim 37, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

40. (original) The cutting of claim 39, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

41. (previously presented) The cutting of claim 37, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

42-74 (canceled)

75. (previously presented) A method of enhancing the longevity of flower blooms on plant cuttings, the method comprising:

treating a plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide;

harvesting from the treated plant a cutting that contains at least one flower; and

exposing the harvested cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the cutting or the at least one flower thereon,

whereby the cutting exhibits enhanced longevity of flower blooms as compared to a cutting that contains at least one flower and is removed from an untreated plant.

76. (previously presented) The method of claim 75, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor to the plant.

77. (original) The method of claim 75, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

78. (original) The method of claim 77, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

79. (previously presented) The method of claim 75, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

80. (previously presented) The method of claim 75 further comprising:

applying a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide to the harvested cutting.

81. (currently amended) A method of enhancing the longevity of flower blooms on plant cuttings, the method comprising:

harvesting from a plant a cutting that contains at least one flower; and

treating the harvested cutting with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide; ~~and~~

~~exposing the harvested cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the cutting or the at least one flower thereon,~~

whereby said treating imparts to the harvested cutting enhanced longevity of flower blooms as compared to an untreated harvested cutting.

82. (previously presented) The method of claim 81, wherein said treating comprises topically applying the hypersensitive response elicitor to the plant.

83. (original) The method of claim 81, wherein the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide is derived from a plant pathogen.

84. (original) The method of claim 83, wherein the plant pathogen is selected from the group consisting of *Erwinia, Pseudomonas, Ralstonia, Xanthomonas, Clavibacter*, and *Phytophthora*.

85. (previously presented) The method of claim 81, wherein the plant is a monocot or a dicot.

86-88 (canceled)

89. (previously presented) The method according to claim 25, wherein the plant is a floriculture crop.

90. (previously presented) The method according to claim 31, wherein the plant is a floriculture crop.

91. (previously presented) The cutting according to claim 37, wherein the plant is a floriculture crop.

92 (canceled)

93. (previously presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the plant is a floriculture crop.

94. (new) The method according to claim 1 further comprising, prior to said treating:

identifying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide that can inhibit desiccation of a cutting removed the treated plant.

95. (new) The method according to claim 18 further comprising, prior to said treating:

identifying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide that can inhibit desiccation of and enhance the longevity of flower blooms on a cutting harvested from the treated plant.

96. (new) The method according to claim 75 further comprising, prior to said treating:

identifying the hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide that can enhance the longevity of flower blooms on a cutting harvested from the treated plant.

97. (new) A method of inhibiting desiccation of cuttings removed from a floriculture crop plant comprising:

treating a floriculture crop plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide;

removing a cutting from the treated floriculture crop plant, the cutting comprising at least one flower; and

exposing the removed cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the removed cutting,

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the removed cutting.

98. (new) A method of harvesting a cutting from a floriculture crop plant comprising:

treating a floriculture crop plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide;

harvesting a cutting from the treated floriculture crop plant, the cutting comprising at lease one flower; and

exposing the harvested cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the harvested cutting,

whereby said treating inhibits desiccation of the harvested cutting and enhances the longevity of flower blooms on the harvested cutting.

99. (new) A method of enhancing the longevity of flower blooms on floriculture crop plant cuttings, the method comprising:

treating a floriculture crop plant with a hypersensitive response elicitor protein or polypeptide;

harvesting from the treated floriculture crop plant a cutting comprising at least one flower; and

exposing the harvested cutting to conditions that, in the absence of said treating, would cause desiccation of the cutting or the at least one flower thereon,

whereby the cutting exhibits enhanced longevity of flower blooms as compared to a cutting that contains at least one flower and is removed from an untreated plant.